

Voluntary - Public

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## Japan

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### **Chef Nobu Matsuhisa is recognized as U.S. Food Ambassador to Japan**

**Report Categories:**

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**Report Highlights:**

Charge d'Affaires James Zumwalt recognized Chef Nobu Matsuhisa as an "Honorary U.S. Food Ambassador" to Japan on June 19 at the Ambassador's residence. Chef Nobu was honored for being "one of the top creative minds in the American food scene for many years, with a unique ability to create a special connection between American and Japanese cuisine." Following the presentation, Chef Nobu unveiled a special American Independence Day menu inspired by the Obama White House where First Lady Michelle Obama has made healthy eating and food education an integral part of her public outreach.

**General Information:**

**Introduction**

Charge d'Affaires James Zumwalt recognized Chef Nobu Matsuhisa as an "Honorary U.S. Food Ambassador" to Japan on June 19 at a ceremony held at the Ambassador's residence. Chef Nobu was honored for being "one of the top creative minds in the American food scene for many years, with a unique ability to create a special connection between American and Japanese cuisine."



**Chef Nobu accepting the award from Charge  
d'Affaires Jim Zumwalt**

For over 60 years, Japan and the United States have had a close relationship in agriculture and food. In fact, the unique partnership between U.S. cooperators, FAS and Japan's food and agricultural sectors has made Japan the most successful country for the market development of U.S. food products in history. Japan was the first country to reach \$1 billion in U.S. food exports in 1970, the first country to reach \$10 billion in 1995. Since 1946, the United States has exported over \$280 billion worth of U.S. agricultural and food products to Japan. Today, even though the United States is the largest supplier of food products to Japan, the image of U.S. food is obscure and some misconceptions exist. Moreover, cooperators have not had many opportunities to work together on projects that would complement their individual activities.

FAS Japan is setting the stage for a new era of market development in Japan, in which we show the face of American food and agriculture to the Japanese public by educating them on the reliability, safety and high quality of American food products and by promoting the United States as the most dynamic food culture in the world. A major objective of the campaign is to provide a platform for the cooperators to work together to complement their individual work to market U.S. food and agricultural products in Japan.

In order to implement this new initiative, in late 2008 FAS Japan in cooperation with the California Agricultural Export Council introduced the V5: Healthy Eating Campaign. A major objective of the campaign is to promote healthy and delicious V5 original recipes that appeal to Japanese tastes while also promoting U.S. food ingredients. Earlier this year, FAS Japan launched a business website, [us-ato.jp](http://us-ato.jp), along with re-launching the [myfood.jp](http://myfood.jp) consumer website. Our largest event to date featured Chef Nobu. Following the award presentation, Chef Nobu presented his ideas about American cuisine and what it means to bridge Japanese and American culture through food. He also demonstrated his Nobu-style cuisine using U.S. food ingredients.

## **Media Coverage**



The United States being the largest supplier of food products to Japan, combined with the international fame of Chef Nobu, created the foundation necessary for outstanding press coverage.

**A large number of media attending the Chef Nobu event.**

The event was attended by 60 members of the Japanese press including representatives from television, national newspapers, magazines, and trade journals. The press conference was widely reported by the Japanese media. For example, Japan's national public network, NHK, featured an 87-second spot on their evening show which reached over 1.4 million viewers, two more 87-second spots on their business shows, and a 10 minute morning report, which was advertised on their website before the program. NHK's sister satellite broadcast aired an exclusive interview of Chef Nobu about his becoming an "Honorary U.S. Food Ambassador" to Japan. Clips from our event were broadcast in this 23 minute feature. Other media coverage from the press conference included stories on Jiji.com, Mainichi Shimbun, Kyodo news, Kanagwa station, Nihon Nogyo Shimbun, Sankei Business, and 22 local newspapers. There was also a featured story about the event on the popular U.S. Embassy Tokyo website. The total value of the media coverage for this event is estimated to be at least \$500,000.

**Cooking Demonstration and Questions and Answers**



Following the award presentation, Chef Nobu unveiled a special American Independence Day menu inspired by the Obama White House where First Lady Michelle Obama has made healthy eating and food education an integral part of her public outreach.

**Chef Nobu prepares the delicious  
Alaskan Salmon Sashimi salad.**

Chef Nobu cooked two dishes that epitomized his ability to cross cultures with food: Alaskan salmon sashimi salad with Matsuhisa dressing and U.S. fillet steak and brown rice salsa.

As their name implies, U.S. ingredients were included in the dishes. The first dish prepared, Alaskan salmon sashimi salad, mixes American ingredients such as Alaskan salmon with fresh vegetables and Asian ingredients such as soy sauce. The second dish, U.S. fillet steak and brown rice salsa, combines U.S. beef along with Japanese rice and a South American-like salsa. Both dishes embody the celebrity chef's ability to take regional ingredients from around the world and blend them together to create a new delicacy that all cultures can share.



**Chef Nobu shows the press his Alaskan salmon sashimi salad and U.S. steak and brown rice salsa.**

#### **Nobu Comments**

Other successes with the cooking demonstration were more subtle but added incredible value to the event; namely, the endorsement of American foods. Throughout the demonstration, Chef Nobu complemented U.S. food culture. He stated that “the quality and the variety and abundance of U.S. food make it a great place to introduce new ideas and new menus.” He also stated that the quality of U.S. food, especially seafood, improved tremendously over the last 20 years. In a country famous for celebrity endorsements, having a celebrity chef prepare gourmet cuisine with American ingredients is a goldmine– not to mention it was in front of the national media!

Chef Nobu’s comments on receiving the reward were humble, such as “I’ve been working very hard for the last 40 years and I am extremely honored to receive this award from the country I love very much.” Mr. Wiggin, Minister Counselor for Agricultural Affairs, pointed out that Chef Nobu was awarded the Honorary U.S. Food Ambassadorship in appreciation of his culinary contributions in uniting the food cultures of our two countries.

#### **Media Sampling Independence Day Cuisine**



The media were invited to sample Chef Nobu's recipes as well as other American foods such as walnut bread, featuring California walnuts, American cherries and strawberries, and craft beer and wine.

**Media and guests sample Chef Nobu's menu items.**

As part of the Healthy American V5 Campaign we offered a California Green Gazpacho, which featured romaine lettuce, celery, olive oil and many other healthy ingredients. Crabmeat and Calrose rice salad, which was developed by the Ambassador's Residence Executive Chef Edward Crawford, was offered as another healthy menu.

Another exciting feature of the event was the introduction of the ATO Japan produced timeline showing the amazing story of the food and agricultural relationship between the United States and Japan. The partnership among the U.S. cooperators, FAS and the Japanese food industry has made Japan the most successful country for the market development of U.S. food and agricultural products in history. The organization logos of the 50 U.S. cooperators active in Japan were presented to the media (far right panel in photo).



**The timeline displaying the amazing story of the food and agricultural relationship between the United States and Japan, and a list of cooperators working in Japan.**